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Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Editor

# **THE SUFI PATH OF LOVE**

**The Spiritual  
Teachings of Rumi**

**William C. Chittick**

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## B.

## Love

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It can easily be shown that Love ('ishq)' is the central theme of all Rūmī's works. If we were to begin studying him through the *Dīwān*, we would soon see that most of its poems deal explicitly with this subject. And as soon as one understands what Rūmī means by Love, one can see that even the *Mathnawī* and *Fīhi mā Fīhi*, where the word "Love" is not mentioned nearly as often, deal largely with Love's branches and ramifications.

In Rūmī's view, Love totally dominates and determines the Sufi's inward and "psychological" states. But because Love pertains to the experiential dimensions of Sufism, not the theoretical, it must be experienced to be understood. It cannot be explained in words, any more than the true nature of one's attachment to a beloved of this world can be set down on paper. This is all the more so since the Sufi's Beloved transcends not only this world, but the next world as well and everything we can possibly conceive or imagine. Rūmī often remarks on the impossibility of explaining Love, although in other verses he takes the complementary point of view: One can discuss it forever and never exhaust it. In any case, the result is the same: Love cannot truly be expressed in words. It is fundamentally an experience situated beyond the narrow confines of articulated thought—but an experience more real than the universe and all it contains.

No matter what I say to explain and elucidate  
Love, shame overcomes me when I come to Love itself. (M I  
112)

Love cannot be contained within our speaking  
or listening; Love is an ocean whose depths cannot be  
plumbed.

Would you try to count the drops of the sea?  
Before that Ocean, the seven seas are nothing. (M V 2731-32)

Love cannot be found in erudition and science,  
books and pages. Whatever is discussed by people—that is not  
the way of lovers. (D 4182)

Whatever you have said or heard is the shell:  
The kernel of Love is a mystery that cannot be divulged. (D  
2988)

Enough! How long will you cling to these words  
of the tongue? Love has many expositions beyond speech. (D  
4355)

Silence! Silence! For the allusions of Love are  
reversed: The meanings become hidden from much  
speaking. (D 12073)

Someone asked, "What is Love?" I replied, "Ask  
not about these meanings.

When you become like me, then you will know.  
When He calls you, you will recite its tale." (D 29050-51)

Oh you who have listened to talk of Love,  
behold Love! What are words in the ears compared to vision  
in the eyes? (D 24681)

Love, then, has to be experienced to be understood. But we can  
still glean a great deal about this ineffable reality from Rūmī's words,  
so long as we remember that Love exists to be realized, not discussed.  
If Rūmī discusses it, he does so only to stir up the desire for Love in  
the heart of the listener:

What is Love? Perfect thirst. So let me explain  
the Water of Life. (D 17361)

### 1. GOD AS LOVE AND BEYOND LOVE

God is the source of all love, just as He is the source of all other  
things. But to what extent may it properly be said that "God is Love"?  
The fact that Love is an Attribute of God is confirmed implicitly by  
numerous Koranic verses in which God is said to "love" something.  
The Sufis usually quote the following verse, since it shows clearly  
the hierarchical relationship between God's Love for man and man's  
love for God, the latter of which derives its existence from the former:  
"God will bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, humble  
towards the believers, disdainful towards the unbelievers, men who

struggle in the path of God, not fearing the reproach of any reproacher" (V 54).

As to whether or not we may say that "God is Love," the answer is the same as with any other divine Attribute: yes and no. God is certainly Love, but this Attribute does not exhaust His Reality. In the same way He is Mercy, Knowledge, Life, Power, and Will. He possesses all these qualities; His Being is the same as their Being; but we may not say that God is Mercy and nothing else, or that He is Knowledge and nothing else. As the "Coincidence of Opposites," He possesses all His Attributes absolutely, yet in His Essence He is beyond them all. From one point of view He is Love, but from another point of view He is beyond Love. Both points of view are seen in Rūmī's verses and prose.

Love is affection beyond bounds. Hence it is said that Love is truly God's Attribute, while it is the attribute of His servants only in a derivative sense. He loves them is everything. What then is they love Him? (M II intro.)

Fear is not even a hair before Love; in the Religion of Love, all things are sacrificed.

Love is an Attribute of God, but fear is an attribute of the servant afflicted by lust and gluttony.

Since you have read in the Koran they love Him placed in a single verse with He loves them,

Know that Love and Affection are Attributes of God. But fear is not God's Attribute, dear friend!

What relationship exists between God's Attribute and that of a handful of dust? Or between the attribute of a temporal being and that of the All-Holy?

If I should continue my explanation of Love, a hundred resurrections would pass before I could complete it,

Since the date of the resurrection has a limit—but where are limits when it is a question of God's Attributes? (M V 2184-90)

Know that Love's branches are in Eternity—without-beginning, its roots in Eternity—without-end—this tree is not supported by God's Throne, the earth, or a trunk. (D 4183)

When I leave sleeping and eating behind, I will become like everlasting Love: Living, Self-subsistent. (D 16036)

Others call Thee Love, but I call Thee the Sultan of Love—oh Thou who art beyond the concept of this or that, do not go without me! (D 23303)

No one has ever walked two or three paces toward the garden of Love without a hundred salaams from the Gardener.

Beyond Love are thousands upon thousands of courtyards, but their might and majesty prevent them from entering the mind. (D 10109-10)

The Caravan of the Unseen enters the visible world, but it remains hidden from all these ugly people.

How should lovely women come to ugly men? The nightingale always comes to the rosebush.

The jasmine grows next to the narcissus, the rose comes to the sweet-mouthed bud.

All of these are symbols—I mean that the other world keeps coming into this world.

Like cream hidden in the soul of milk, No-place keeps coming into place.

Like intellect concealed in blood and skin, the Traceless keeps entering into traces.

And from beyond the intellect, beautiful Love comes dragging its skirts, a cup of wine in its hand.

And from beyond Love, that indescribable One who can only be called "That" keeps coming. (D 30789-96)

## 2. THE WORLD AS CREATED BY LOVE

Love is desire and need. Although in His Essence God is beyond all need, yet at the level of His Attributes He said, "I desired (or "loved") to be known, so I created the world."<sup>8</sup> Likewise, it was His Love for the Prophet which made Him say, "But for thee, I would not have created the celestial spheres." Hence God's Love for manifesting the Hidden Treasure through the prophets and saints was the motivating force in His creation of the universe. As a result, Love courses throughout the world's arteries. All movement and activity result from that original Love; the world's forms are but the reflections of its unique reality.

The creatures are set in motion by Love, Love by Eternity—without-beginning; the wind dances because of the spheres, the trees because of the wind. (D 5001)

God said to Love, "If not for thy beauty, how should I pay attention to the mirror of existence?" (D 26108)

The world is like a mirror displaying Love's perfection. Oh friends! Who has ever seen a part greater than its whole? (D 25248)

Love is the kernel, the world the shell; Love is the sweetmeat, the world the cauldron. (D 22225)

Like Adam and Eve, Love gives birth to a thousand forms; the world is full of its paintings, but it has no form. (D 5057)

Oh Love who hast a thousand names and a cup of sweet wine! Oh Thou who bestowest a thousand skills!

Oh formless One with a thousand forms! Oh Form-giver to the Turk, Greek, and Ethiopian! (D 14022-23)

Love splits the spheres with a hundred splittings, it shakes the earth mightily.

Pure Love was paired with Muḥammad—for its sake God said to him, "But for thee . . .".

Since he was the unique goal of Love, God singled him out from the other prophets:

"But for pure Love, how should I have given existence to the celestial spheres?

I erected the heavenly wheel so that you might understand Love's exaltation." (M V 2736-40)

The spheres turn for the sake of the lovers, the Wheel revolves for the sake of Love,

Not for the baker or ironsmith, nor for the carpenter or druggist.

The heavens turn round about Love: Rise, so that we also may turn!

Behold "But for thee, I would not have created . . .". What did He say? "Muḥammad the chosen is Love's mine."

For a time let us revolve around Love. How long will we circle this carrion? (D 12293-97)

### 3. THE WORLD AS MAINTAINED BY LOVE

All things participate in God's Love, the motivating force of creation, so all things are lovers. In other words, each existent is infused with need and desire for other existents and is constantly striving to gain union with them. These individual loves are the immediate source of all movement and activity.

God's wisdom in His destiny and decree has made us lovers of one another.

That foreordination has paired all parts of the world and set them in love with their mates.

Each part of the world desires its mate, just like amber and straw.

Heaven says to the earth, "Hollo! Thou drawest me like iron to a magnet!" . . .

The female desires the male so that they may perfect each other's work.

God placed desire within man and woman so that the world might find subsistence through their union.

He places desire in each part for another part and their union gives birth to offspring. (M III 4400-03, 14-16)

A hundred thousand snakes and ants, a hundred thousand eaters of their daily bread—each seeks a share, each has its own lament. (D 20467)

Oh, a different kind of fruit shakes every branch, a different cup of wine intoxicates each of us and makes us its fool!

Behind the veil two hundred ladies have scratched their cheeks and beaten their heads, each widowed from a different mate.

A fisherman's hook is stuck in every fish's mouth—the one shouts, "Oh dear!", the other, "How lovely!"

Gabriel dances in love for God's Beauty, the afreet in love for a she-devil. (D 24643-46)

Everyone was made for a particular task; desire for it was placed in his heart.

How should hand and foot move without desire? How should sticks and leaves move without water and wind? (M III 1618-19)

The King spoke hidden words into everyone's ear—to the spirit of each, He gave a different message.

War among the creatures, hatred among the living—He sets them there each instant: That is a fine friend!

He spoke sweet and flowing words to the rose and made it laugh, He made a subtle point to the cloud and wet its eyes.

He says to the rose, "Celebration is best!" He says to the cloud, "Weeping is best!" No one accepts the advice of another.

He says to the branch, "Dance!", to the leaves, "Clap!", to the heavens, "Revolve about the earth's mansions!" (D 26047-51)

That world is like an ocean, and this world is foam. God the Almighty desired to keep the foam in good order, so He made certain people turn their backs to the ocean in order to maintain the foam. . . . A tent has been pitched for the king, and certain people have been made busy keeping the tent in good order. One of them says, "If I did not make the pegs, where could they tie the ropes?" . . . God gave each of them a satisfaction and happiness in his task, so much so, that were he to live a hundred thousand years and do nothing

else, every day his love for it would increase. (F 92-93/104)

The trees were saying, "What a shame! Under the earth we possess such skill and elegance and beauty! We have received such favors from God; and other roots have no knowledge of these things. Oh would that there were a day of bazaar, so that we could display our beauty! So that our excellence and the ugliness of others could be brought to light!"

An answer came to them from the Unseen World: "Oh prisoners of water and clay, occupy yourselves with your tasks and acquire skills! Be not broken-hearted! Fear not that your skills will remain hidden! For We have placed these pearls and fruits in your treasuries, and you yourself had no knowledge of them. They were concealed in Our Unseen Knowledge. Before entering into existence the skills and beauties that you see today in yourselves were pearls in the Unseen Ocean, hurrying to enter the treasuries of the inhabitants of dry land. We have placed a special characteristic in every possessor of a skill, in every craftsman and master of a task, whether goldsmith, jeweler, magician, alchemist; and in every tradesman, lawyer, and scholar—so that he will always be bubbling over and displaying his own skill. We have placed this bubbling and this desire, and they have become unsettled, like girls who have just reached puberty. In their houses the girls adorn their clothing and their beauty and gaze at mirrors. They want to tear aside the veil and show their loveliness to the elect and the vulgar. From the bottom of their souls they say,

'Old women's words cannot hold us back, the heart-distressing world cannot detain us.

She whose long tresses extend like a chain—not even a chain can keep her in the house!'

...

"But what place is man's farm plot—within which the crop is flesh and skin and bones—for these aspirations and desires? These desires are My Holy Attributes. . . . 'I was a Hidden Treasure, so I wanted to be known.'" (MS 28)

#### 4. LOVE AND BEAUTY: TRUE AND DERIVATIVE

Man's love can be divided into two kinds: "true-love" (*'ishq-i haqīqī*), or love for God; and "derivative love" (*'ishq-i majāzī*), or love for

anything else. But on closer examination, one sees that all love is in fact love for God, since whatever exists is His reflection or shadow. The difference then between the two kinds of love is that some people know that only God truly exists and direct their love only toward Him; while others believe in the independent existence of various objects of desire and so turn their love toward them.

But since love for other than God derives from love for Him, it ultimately leads to Him. One by one man's objects of desire will show their unfaithfulness, and man will turn his love elsewhere. However, many will not find the true Beloved until after death, when it will be too late to try to close the gap of separation. The Sufi has already discovered that there is only one Beloved; he sees all derivative love as cold and unreal.

In the present context Rūmī explains the nature of beauty clearly and succinctly: It is a drop of spray from the infinite Ocean, or a ray of light shining upon a wall. All beauty derives from the other world; so here it is borrowed and ephemeral. True Beauty pertains only to God.

In the eyes of the elect, Love is a tremendous eternal light, even though the vulgar see it as but form and sensuality. (D 18197)

All the hopes, desires, loves, and affections that people have for different things—fathers, mothers, friends, heavens, the earth, gardens, palaces, sciences, works, food, drink—the saint knows that these are desires for God and all those things are veils. When men leave this world and see the King without these veils, then they will know that all were veils and coverings, that the object of their desire was in reality that One Thing. All their difficulties will be solved, all the questions and perplexities they had in their breasts will be answered. They will see all things face to face. (F 35/46)

All things in the world—wealth, women, clothing—are desired for the sake of other things, not for their own sake. Do you not see that if you had a hundred thousand dirhams and were hungry, but you could not find food, you would not be able to eat those dirhams? Women are for children and for satisfying passion. Clothing is for warding off cold. So it is with all things, which are linked together, one after the other, all the way to God. It is He who is desired for His own sake, not for something else. He is better than all things, nobler than all, pleasanter than all. So how should He be desired for the sake of what is less than He? So He is the

Goal (LIII 42). When He is attained, the Universal Object of Desire has been attained. There is no passing on. (F 101/112-113)

Anyone madly in love with a dead thing has hope for something that lives.

The carpenter has turned toward wood in hope of serving a moon-faced beloved.

Strive in the hope of a Living One who does not become inanimate after a day or two!

Choose not a mean companion out of meanness, for intimacy with him is but a borrowed thing.

If your intimates other than God possess faithfulness, what happened to your father and mother?

If you can depend on someone other than God, where are your nursemaid and tutor?

Your intimacy with milk and breasts has gone, your dread of grammar school has gone.

That was a ray upon the wall of their existence: The radiance has returned to the Sun.

When that ray falls upon something, you become its lover, oh courageous man!

Whatever you love in existence has received a gold plating from God's Attributes.

When the gold returns to its origin and the copper remains, your nature becomes disgusted and divorces it.

Pull yourself back from those things gold-plated with His Attributes, continue not in your ignorance to call the counterfeit coin "beautiful."

That beauty of the counterfeit coin is a borrowed thing; beneath its comeliness lies the substance of uncomeliness.

Gold leaves the surface of the counterfeit coin for the Mine—you also, go to that Mine where it is going!

Light goes from the wall to the Sun—go to the Sun that always moves in proportion!

From now on take water from heaven, for you have seen no faithfulness from the drainpipe! (M III 545-560)

Love is an Attribute of God, who has no needs; to be in love with other than Him is derivative.

For its beauty is gold-plated: Outwardly it is light, inwardly smoke.

When the light goes and the smoke appears, then derivative love turns cold.

That beauty returns to its Source; a body remains, putrid, disgraced, and ugly.

The moonlight returns to the moon, its reflection leaves the black wall.

Then water and clay remain without that ornament: Without the moon, the wall becomes like a devil.

When gold leaves the face of counterfeit coin and returns to dwell in its own mine,

The disgraced copper remains like smoke—but its lover is even more black-faced. (M VI 971-978)

All this beauty and attractiveness in the face of the black earth has shone forth from the Moon of the Unseen: It is a ray of Perfection's Light. (D 14289)

Beauty in man is like gilding—otherwise, why did your lovely mistress become an old ass?

She was like an angel but became a devil, for her comeliness was a borrowed thing. (M II 712-713)

"The moon-faced beauties of the world have stolen beauty from Our Beauty: They have stolen a mote of My Beauty and Goodness.

In the end these moon-faced darlings will be straw-faced. Such is the state of thieves in My authority's presence.

Day has come, oh dust-creatures! Return what you have stolen! Oh sweet beloved, how should dust possess wealth or beauty?"

When night veils the sun, the planets begin to boast. Venus says, "Know that all belongs to me!" The moon retorts, "It is mine!"

Jupiter brings pure gold out of his sack; Mars threatens Saturn, "Watch out for my sharp dagger!"

Mercury sits at the front: "I am the chief of chiefs. The heavens are my property and the constellations my pillars."

At daybreak the Sun brings its regiments from the east. It says, "Oh thieves! Where have you gone? Now all belongs to me!"

Venus' liver has been torn and the moon's neck broken; my shining face has turned Mercury dry and cold.

Our light has destroyed the work of Mars and Saturn; destitute, Jupiter cries out, "Gone my sack of gold!" (D 20545-53)

The universe displays the beauty of Thy Comeliness! The goal is Thy Beauty—all else is pretext. (D 31554)

Through the cup of the noble, Thou hast poured a drop from that hidden goblet upon this earth of dust.

Since tresses and cheeks show a sign of that drop, kings keep licking the ground.

Delicate earth has received a drop of Beauty, so you kiss it night and day with a hundred hearts.

Though mixed with earth, a single drop can drive you mad—what then will that wine do to you when pure? (M V 372-375)

In reality, that which attracts is a single thing, but it appears multiple. Do you not see how a man desires a hundred different things? He says, "I want *tutmāj* stew, I want *burāk*, I want halva, I want fried meat, I want fruit, I want dates." He enumerates and names all these things, but the root is one thing: hunger. Do you not see that after he is surfeited with a single thing he says, "None of these is necessary"? Hence it is clear that there were not ten or a hundred things, there was only one. (F 7/19)

Your beloved is not form, whether your love is from this world or that.

Why do you leave the form that you love when its spirit goes?

Its form is still there—why have you had your fill? Oh lover, look carefully! Who is your beloved? (M II 703-705)

When you go to a friend's form, you go for the sake of your companionship with him.

Hence in meaning you have gone to the formless, even if you are unaware of your goal.

So in reality God is worshiped by all things, for they all travel their paths in search of joy.

But some have turned their faces toward the tail. The Head is the root, but they have lost it. (M VI 3753-56)

May God the Exalted make that good-news about which you wrote the prelude to the Greatest Good-News, for all the good-news of this world flashes forth as the ray of that sweet Good-News. Were it not for the radiance and splendor of that Greatest Good-News, no good-news in the world would have any savor—it would all taste like dirt and straw. The ray of His Bestowal gave wheat to straw, stars to smoke (cf. Koran XLI 11-12), and the beauty of mankind to dust; likewise it gave the good-news that partial spirits will be united with their hopes and desires. Thus men of intellect are not content with just this; they seek the Infinite Root and Source and Mine of these desires and aims. Then they may

attain to those Roots through these branches, and actualize that Reality through this derivative. (MK 8: 15/52)

May the amir of amirs attain to the felicity and good-fortune that lie beyond the felicity and good-fortune understood by men and worldlings! Concerning it the Prophet said, "No eye has seen it, no ear has heard it, no human being has perceived it in his heart. Once you see it, you will see beatitude and a great dominion." For the felicity of this world is but the reflection and effects of that felicity: The present life is naught but a game and a diversion (XLVII 36). Every game is the reflection of a serious affair and has been stolen from it, just as children steal their games from serious tasks. (MK 58: 64-65/133)

I wonder at these people who say, "How can the saints and the lovers love that ineffable world, since it has no place or form and is beyond description? How can they derive replenishment and aid from it and be affected by it?" After all, they themselves are occupied with the same thing night and day. Take this person who loves another person and derives replenishment from her: After all, this replenishment, kindness, goodness, knowledge, recollection, thought, joy, heartache—he derives all these things, and all dwell in the world of No-place. Moment by moment he receives replenishment from these meanings and is affected by them, but this does not cause him any wonder. Yet he wonders how some people are in love with the world of No-place and draw replenishment from it. (F 38-39/50)

In man there is a love, a pain, an itch, and a desire such that, if a hundred thousand worlds were to become his property, he would still gain no rest or ease. These people occupy themselves thoroughly with every kind of craft, skill, and position; they learn astronomy, medicine, and other things, but they do not find ease, since their goal has not been attained. After all, the Beloved is called "heart's ease," since the heart finds ease through Him. So how could it find ease and peace through others?

All these diversions and goals are like a ladder. Since the rungs of a ladder are no place to take up residence, but exist only so that you can pass on, happy is he who quickly comes to himself and awareness! Then the long road becomes short, and he does not waste his life on the ladder's rungs. (F 64/75)

Whether love is from this side or from that side, in the end it leads us to that side. (M I 111)



Consider it a blessing that you have suffered loss in the lane of love: Leave aside derivative love, the goal is love for God.

The warrior gives a wooden sword to his son so that he may master it and take a sword into battle.

Love for a human being is that wooden sword. When the trail reaches its end, the object of love will be the All-Merciful. (D 336-338)

Love for God, moreover, is the result of knowledge: When has a man ever sat in foolishness upon such a throne?

How could imperfect knowledge give birth to this love? It gives rise to love, but love for inanimate things.

Deficient knowledge cannot discriminate: It considers lightning to be the sun. (M II 1532-33, 35)

When the vulgar set out on a chase, they are hunting pig: They take infinite pains, but their prey is unlawful to eat.

Love alone is worth hunting—but how can you catch it in your snare?

Unless, perhaps, you become His prey: Leave aside your snare and enter His! (M V 408-410)

## 5. NEED AND ASPIRATION

To become God's prey, one must make oneself worthy of His regard and favor. The first step in this direction is to seek and desire Him. The Beloved will not ignore sincere devotion and need.

When someone hears that in a certain city a generous man is bestowing tremendous gifts and bounties, naturally he will go there in hope of receiving a share. Since God's Bounty is so famous and the whole world knows about His Kindness, why do you not beg from Him? Why do you not desire robes of honor and purses of gold? You sit in indolence and say, "If He wants to, He will give me something," and you do not make a request. Look at the dog, which has neither intellect nor comprehension. When hungry and without food, it comes to you and wags its tail. It means, "Give me food, since I have no food, and you have some." It has this much discernment. Now really, you are not less than a dog, which is not content to sleep in the ashes and say, "If he wants to, he will give me some food." It barks and wags its tail. You also, wag your tail and ask from God! Beg, for in the face of such a

Benefactor, begging is tremendously desirable. Since you have no good fortune, ask for it from someone who is not a niggard and possesses great wealth. (F 171-172/180)

They say that in the end, love is the want and need for something. Hence need is the root, and the needed thing is the branch. I say: After all, when you speak, you speak out of need. Your need brings your words into existence. Since you desired these words, they came into being. So need is prior, and the words came into being from it. Hence need existed without the words, and love and need cannot be the words' branch.

Someone said: But the goal of the need was the words. So how can the goal be the branch?

The master answered: The branch is always the goal—the tree's roots exist for the sake of its branches. (F 139/148)

Almighty God does not bestow anything without need.

Had there been no need for the world, the Lord of the world's inhabitants would not have created it.

If this quaking earth had not needed mountains, would He have created them in their majesty?

Had there not been need for the spheres, He would not have brought the seven heavens from nonexistence.

The sun, the moon, these stars—how could they have come visibly into existence had there been no need?

So the noose of all existences is need: Man's instrument is the extent of his need.

So, oh needful man, quickly increase your need! Then the Sea of Bounty will gush forth in generosity.

These beggars and cripples in the road display their need to people—

Blindness, lameness, illness, and pains—so that people's mercy will be moved.

Does a beggar ever say, "Oh people, give me bread, for I have wealth, warehouses, and a spread table!?" (M II 3274-83)

Where there is pain, cures will come; where there is poverty, wealth will follow.

Where there are questions, answers will be given; where there are ships, water will flow.

Spend less time seeking water and acquire thirst! Then water will gush from above and below. (M III 3210-12)

The cry was heard, "Oh seeker, come! Like a beggar, bounty is in need of beggars!"

Bounty is searching for beggars and the poor, just as fair women search for an unblemished mirror.

The mirror makes fair faces beautiful, beggars bring forth generosity from behind the veil. (M I 2744-46)

Indeed, hunger is the sultan of remedies. Place hunger in the soul—regard it not with such contempt!

Hunger makes all unpleasant things pleasant—but without it, all pleasant things are rejected.

A man was eating bread made from bran. Someone asked him, "How is it you have an appetite for this?"

He replied, "When hunger has been doubled through patience, barley bread becomes halva in my eyes."

God has given hunger to His elect so that they may become mighty lions. (M V 2832-35, 38)

Hunger gives pleasure, not fresh sweetmeats—hunger makes barley bread better than sugar. . . .

Pain renews old medicines and lops off the branch of every indifference.

Pain is an alchemy that renovates—where is indifference when pain intervenes?

Beware, do not sigh coldly in your indifference! Seek pain! Seek pain, pain, pain! (M VI 4296, 4302-04)

Where there is pain, the cure will come; where the land is low, water will run.

If you want the water of mercy, go, become low! Then drink mercy's wine and become drunk! (M II 1939-40)

I will run quickly, quickly, to reach the riders; I will become nonexistent, nothing, to reach the Beloved.

I have become joyful, joyful—I am a spark of fire. I will burn my house and travel to the Desert.

I will become dust, dirt, so that Thou canst make me verdant. I will become water and prostrate myself all the way to the Rosegarden.

Fallen from the heavens, I waver like a dustmote—I will attain security and stop my trembling when I reach the Goal.

The spheres are a place of honor, the earth a place of destruction—I will escape from these two dangers when I reach the Sultan.

This world of earth and air is the substance of unbelief and annihilation—I have entered the heart of unbelief in order to reach faith.

That balanced and harmonious King of the world seeks a balanced lover—my face is as yellow as gold coin so that I may be placed in His Balance.

God's Mercy is water—it moves only towards low ground. I will become dust and Mercy's object in order to reach the All-Merciful.

No physician gives pills and medicine without an illness—I will become totally pain so that I may reach the Remedy. (D 1400)

Since the Remedy of the world is searching for pain and illness, we have cut ourselves off from remedies and are pain's companion. (D 35477)

Love is a physician searching for the ill—otherwise, why should I be sick and infirm? (D 33964)

Indeed, no lover seeks union without his beloved seeking him.

But the love of lovers makes their bodies into bowstrings, while the love of beloveds makes them happy and plump.

When the lightning of love for the loved one flashes in this heart, know that there is also love in that heart.

When love for God has doubled in your heart, without doubt God has love for you.

You have never heard one hand clapping without the other.

The thirsty man laments, "Oh sweet water!" The water also laments, "Where is the drinker!"

This thirst in our souls is the attraction of the Water—we belong to It and It belongs to us. (M III 4393-99)

Of course, love and the regard of friendship always come from both sides. The stimulation of desire and the occasion for ardor derive from both directions, since love for God or for the creature is not one-sided, nor has it ever been. One cannot conceive of the sound of one hand clapping, nor can one dance on one foot. *He loves them is never separate from they love Him, nor is God is well-pleased with them ever without they are well-pleased with Him* (V 119). (MK 98: 102/195)

All kings are enslaved by their slaves, all creatures in love with their lovers. . . .

The heart-ravishers' hearts are prisoners to those who have lost their hearts, all beloveds prey to their lovers.

When you deem a man a lover, know that he is also a beloved, for relatively speaking, he is both this and that.

Although the thirsty seek water from the world, yet water in the world is also seeking the thirsty. (M I 1736, 39-41)

I bear the name "lover," but indeed He has no patience without me—the love of my Beloved has passed the limit of my love. (D 25028)

Lovers themselves do not seek—in the whole world, there is no seeker but He. (D 4471)

Lovers must seek the Beloved, running on their faces and heads like a torrent to His stream.

But He alone is the Seeker, and we are like shadows. Oh, our words are all the words of the Beloved! . . .

We sit with Him and say, "Oh Beloved, where is the Beloved?" Drunk, we sing "Where? Where?" in the Beloved's lane. (D 4650-51, 57)

Marvellous! The Beloved is with you in the midst of your seeking! He holds your hand wherever you wander. (D 27421)

Through Thy radiance, stones become rubies! Through Thy seeking, seekers reach the Sought! (D 32450)

He does all the seeking, yet His title is "Sought"; He does all the worshiping, yet His title is "Worshiped". (D 30467)

When the heart was annihilated within Him, He remained; then it understood the object of His words: "I Myself am the Seeker and the Sought." (D 13517)

When you see love within yourself, add to it so that it may increase! When you see in yourself your capital—your quest for God—add to it through questing! For "In movement are blessings." If you add not to it, your capital will leave you.

You are not less than the earth. Men change the earth by moving and turning it with shovels, then it yields crops. When they abandon it, it becomes hard. Since you see that the quest is within yourself, come and go! Do not say, "What profit is there in going?" Just go! The profit will show itself. When a man goes to his shop, the profit of his going is to display his need. Then God gives him his daily bread. But if he sits at home, that would be to claim self-sufficiency, and his daily bread would not come to him.

I wonder at this tiny infant who cries, and its mother gives it milk. If it should think, "What profit is there in crying? What is it that causes milk to come?"—then it would not receive any milk. But we see that it receives milk because of its crying. (F 215/222)

How should the infant know the effect his cries have upon hearts? . . .

So weep, even if you do not know the result! The everlasting gardens and rivers of paradise will be born from your tears. (D 11090, 92)

Whether he runs or walks, in the end the seeker will find.

Occupy yourself totally with seeking, for seeking is a good guide upon the Path! (M III 978-979)

Every hungry man finds food in the end—the sun of good fortune will shine down upon him. (M V 1755)

Look not at your own beautiful or ugly form—look at Love and the Object of your search!

Look not at your own vileness and weakness—look at your aspiration, oh noble man!

In whatever state you may be, seek! Seek water constantly, oh man of dry lips!

For your dry lips give witness that in the end you will find a fountain.

The lips' dryness is a message from the water: "If you keep on moving about, without doubt you will find me."

Seeking is a blessed movement, seeking kills obstacles on the way to God.

Seeking is the key to your objects of desire, it is your army and the victory of your banners. (M III 1437-43)

Whether you are pure or impure, flee not. For nearness to Him increases purity. (D 7096)

Whatever you possess—were you not once seeking it? Your searches alert you and give you good news.

Act such that your seeking may increase: He who plants a great deal may hope for a bountiful harvest. (D 3753-54)

If you are a believer, then enter the line of battle! A feast has been prepared for you in heaven. . . .

Shed tears and burn in your seeking all night, like a candle beheaded by flames.

Shut your lips to food and drink, hurry to the table of heaven! . . .

If you are taken there, no wonder! Look not at your own incapacity—look at your seeking!

Your seeking is God's deposit within you, for every seeker is worthy of the object of his search.

Strive so that your seeking may increase, so that your heart may leave this pit of the body! (M V 1727, 29–30, 33–35)

Whatever mate you desire, go! Become obliterated in your beloved! Assume the same shape and attributes!

If you want Light, then gain preparedness for Light! If you want distance from Him, become self-seeing and distant!

And if you want a way out of this ruined prison, turn not away from the Beloved, but *prostrate yourself and draw nigh* (XCVI 19). (M I 3605–07)

Whatever makes you tremble—know that you are worth just that! That is why the lover's heart is greater than God's Throne. (D 6400)

God will give you what you seek. Where your aspiration lies, that you will become, for "The bird flies with his wings, but the believer flies with his aspiration." (F 77/89)

Everyone in the 18,000 worlds is in love with something, and the eminence of every lover depends upon the eminence of his beloved. When a beloved is more subtle, refined, and noble-substanced, then the lover is greater. . . . The day-bird must be preferred to that of night, to the same extent that light is preferred over darkness, for it is in love with the sun's light, while the night-bird loves darkness. (MK 1: 4/35)

The lover's grandeur is measured by that of his beloved. Oh poor lover, see to which group you belong! (D 27832)

Man is like a jewel that determines its own worth: No Sanjar or Qubād was ever happy as a sheriff! (D 26027)

## 6. THE RELIGION OF LOVE

Love for God implies theory, practice, and realization. The lover discerns the true Beloved from derivative beloveds, augments his seeking and need through spiritual discipline under the guidance of a shaykh, and negates all things other than the Beloved, including himself, so that only He remains.

Love's creed is separate from all religions: The creed and denomination of lovers is God. (M II 1770)

What is the *mi'rāj* of the heavens?

Nonexistence. The religion and creed of the lovers is nonexistence. (M VI 233)

My religion is to live through Love—life through this spirit and body are my shame. (M VI 4059)

The intellect does not know and is bewildered by the Religion of Love—even if it should be aware of all religions. (D 2610)

In the religion of the lovers, that spirit is mortally ill whose illness does not make him worse every day. (D 3610)

Everything other than love for the most beautiful God is agony of the spirit, though it be sugar-eating.

What is agony of the spirit? To advance toward death without seizing hold of the Water of Life. (M I 3686–87)

The worst of all deaths is to be without Love. Why does the oyster tremble? For the pearl. (D 13297)

Every breast without the Beloved is a body without head.

The man far from Love's snare is a bird without wings.

What does he know of the universe? For he knows nothing of Those Who Know. (D 7576–78)

If Love's pulse does not beat within a man, let him be Plato, he is but an ass.

If a head is not full of Love, that head is behind the tail. (D 12330–31)

If you have not been a lover, count not your life as lived, for on the Day of Reckoning it will not be counted.

Any time that passes without Love will be shamefaced before God. (D 10315–16)

A lifetime without Love is of no account. Love is the Water of Life—drink it down with heart and soul!

Know that all but the lovers are fish without water, dead and desiccated, though they be viziers. (D 11909–10)

The school is Love, the teacher the Almighty—and we are like students, these words our recitation. (D 4534)

The lovers' teacher is the Beloved's Beauty: Their book and lesson are His Face. (M III 3847)

Choose Love, Love! Without the sweet life of Love, living is a burden—as you have seen. (D 32210)

In the two or three days you live in  
this world—what a shame to live only by spirit!

Never be without Love, lest you be  
dead—die in Love and remain alive!

The subsistent things, the deeds of righteousness  
(XVIII 47) are Love. This world is chaff and Love is wheat.  
The wind of death's fixed term will take away the chaff—a  
single fleck will not remain. May their light running before  
them (LXVI 8) always be the outcome. Persevere in your  
intention, and encourage, advise, and aid your friends to do  
the same, for this is the work, the rest is all regret. The  
dominion of this world is like a drum whose beating bewilders  
people and attracts them to it, yet it is empty within—it has  
no excellence or profit. Happy is he who finds the druggist's  
tray (*ṭablah*) of Love and whose heart turns cold toward the  
sound of the drum (*ṭabl*) of this world's dominion.

From end to end the world's  
dominion brings naught to your head but headache.  
Empty head! Why lay so much headache on your head?

Though you make the sun and  
moon your head's crown, you will be placing your  
head on cold brick once your life comes to a  
head. (MK 21: 26-27/71-72)

Love is the Water of Life and will deliver you  
from death. Oh, he who throws himself into Love is a  
king! (D 6563)

Love is the bottomless Ocean of Life—  
everlasting life is the least of its gifts. (D 23469)

A call reached the lover from the world of his  
inmost mystery: "Love is God's Burāq, put it to the  
gallop!" (D 13550)

Mount upon Love and think not about the way!  
For the horse of Love is very sure-footed.

Though the path be uneven, in a single bound  
it will take you to the waystation. (D 6922-23)

Love is a mother who will take her child—the  
lover—before the Sultan only in safety.

Until he has matured and become free from his  
spirit, she will not take him before that Spirit of the spirit of  
the spirit. . . .

May my spirit be sacrificed to Love! For the  
only place it takes the heart is on a *mi'rāj* to the heavens. (D  
10374-75, 77)

The Burāq of love for the meanings took my  
intellect and heart. Where did it take them? To that side you  
know not! (D 32300)

When the Burāq of Love arrives from heaven, it  
will deliver the Jesus of the spirit from this ass, yes  
indeed! (D 30917)

Oh falcon-like heart of mine! Fly toward the  
hand of His Love with His Love's wings! How long will you fly  
with your own wings? (D 26330)

Thou art the Spirit of the spirit of the world,  
and Thy name is Love: Whoever receives a wing from Thee  
flies to the empyrean. (D 9522)

Love is the alchemist's elixir: It makes the earth  
into a mine of meanings. (D 8583)

Your sensuality is copper, and the light of Love  
is the elixir: Love's light transmutes the copper of your  
existence into gold. (D 9003)

A whole world sleeps in the night of  
heedlessness, but we live in the daylight of Love's sun.

None but the lover basks in the light of day—  
Love and ardent desire will keep you in daytime's  
radiance. (D 8523-24)

In face of His Love's joy and His sun's light,  
what is the body? Dust. And the spirit? Vapor. (D 31524)

What sort of Beloved is He? As long as a single  
hair of love for yourself remains, He will not show His Face;  
you will be unworthy of union with Him, and He will give  
you no access. You must be completely repelled by yourself  
and the world and be your own self's enemy, or else the  
Friend will not show His Countenance. So when our religion  
resides in a person's heart, it stays right there until it takes  
his heart to God and separates it from everything  
unworthy. (F 114-115/125-126)

The joy and heartache of the lovers is He, the  
wages and salary for their service He.

Were aught to be contemplated other than the  
Beloved, how would that be Love? That would be idle  
infatuation.

Love is that flame which, when it blazes up,  
burns away everything except the Beloved.

It drives home the sword of no god in order to  
slay other than God. Consider carefully, after no god what  
remains?

There remains but God, the rest has gone.  
Bravo, oh great, idol-burning Love! (M V 586-590)

You are God's lover, and God is such that when He comes, not a single hair of you will remain.

Before His glance, a hundred like you are annihilated. Is it that you are in love with your own negation, sir?

You are a shadow in love with the sun. The sun comes, and the shadow is quickly naughted. (M III 4621-23)

Oh Love, pass the bitter judgment! Cut me off from other than Thyself! Oh torrent, you are roaring. Roar! You take me to the Ocean. (D 35823)

The world has appeared as if by sorcery, but Love is Moses' staff, swallowing it down in a single gulp. (D 12850)

For ages, oh Beloved, I have beaten Thy love's drum to Ḥallāj's tune: "Verily in my death is my life." (M VI 4062)

The shaykh said, "Oh Creator, I am a lover. I sin if I seek aught but Thee.

If I should bring the eight paradises into my view or serve Thee for fear of hell,

Then I would be a believer, seeking safety. For both of these are the body's share."

A lover's food is love for God—in his eyes a hundred bodies are not worth a bean. (M V 2713-16)

Marvellous, victorious, splendid Love! It gambled and lost the two worlds and the spirit, but it keeps on gambling. (D 35052)

The beloved said, "You have done all these things, but open your ears wide and listen well:

You have not accomplished the root of the root of love and devotion—what you have done is the branches."

The lover said, "Tell me, what is that root?" She said, "To die and become nonexistent." (M V 1252-54)

Everyone born into the world dies and entrusts his spirit to the guardian angel—but the lover was never born: Love has no father. (D 11936)

In former times my heart and Love worked together—little by little, I remember that now.

Outwardly it appears that I gave birth to love, but in truth Love gave birth to me. (D 2487-88)

Someone asked, "What is the Way?" I said, "This way is to abandon desires."

Oh lover of the King! Know that your way is to seek the pleasure of that Generous Lord.

When you seek the Beloved's desire and pleasure, seeking your own desire is forbidden.

The spirit will be totally transformed into love for the Beloved, for the ascetic cell of the noble travelers is Love.

His Love is not less than the top of some mountain—His Love's mountaintop is enough for me!

The cave where you can find the Friend is Love—then the spirit will gain the adornment of Love's beauty.

Whatever purifies you is the correct road—I will not try to define it.

Be silent and hold fast to the shaykh—Love—for in the two worlds, he is your leader. (D 374)

He who seeks felicity is one thing, the lover something else—he who loves his head has not the feet for Love.

How should Love's two fire-filled eyes, drowned in the liver's blood, search for the heart's desire and the spirits' subsistence?

The lover does not weep for his sorry state, nor does he rub his eyes from heartache: He wants to be worse each instant.

He does not want a day of fortune, nor does he seek a night of ease—his heart stays concealed between night and day like dawn.

The world has two nests: good fortune and affliction—by God's Holy Essence, the lover is outside them both!

The ocean does not make him boil, for he is an unparalleled pearl. His face has not come from the mine, even if it is yellow like gold.

In love with the spirit's King, how should the heart seek a kingdom? Enraptured by His slender waist, how should the spirit seek a robe of honor?

Should a phoenix enter the world, the lover would not seek its shadow, for he is drunk with love for that famous Phoenix.

If the world should become all sugar, his heart would still lament like the reed; and if the Beloved should say "No!" he will still melt like sugar.

I asked my Lord about Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz, whose permanent abode is Love: "Why should such a king go on a journey?" (D 586)

Lovers, who die knowingly, die like sugar before their Beloved.

On the day of Alast they drank the Water of Life—so they cannot die like others.

Since they have been resurrected in Love, they do not die like these people in the crowd.

Through God's Gentleness they have passed beyond the angels—far be it from them to die like humans!

Do you suppose that lions die like dogs, far from His Presence?

When lovers die in their journey, the spirit's King runs out to meet them.

When they die at the feet of that Moon, they all light up like the sun.

The lovers, who are each others' spirit, die in their mutual love.

The water of Love soothes their aching livers, they all come and die in that heartache.

Each is an unparalleled orphan pearl—they do not die next to mothers and fathers.

Lovers fly to the spheres, deniers die in the depths of the Blaze.

Lovers open the eye that sees the Unseen, the rest all die blind and deaf.

In fear the lovers never used to sleep at night—now they all die without dread or danger.

Those who worshiped fodder here were all cows—they die like asses.

Those who sought that vision today die happy and laughing in vision's midst.

The King places them next to His Gentleness—they do not die in the lowliness and insignificance you see.

Those who seek to acquire the virtues of Muhammad die like Abū Bakr and 'Umar.<sup>10</sup>

Far from them is death and annihilation! But I have sung this ghazal supposing they were to die. (D 972)

If you do not know me, then ask the dark night—night is the lover's confidant, the witness of his lamentation and tears.

Why talk of night? For the lover displays a thousand signs, the least of which are tears, yellow cheeks, a frail body, and failing health.

In weeping he is like the clouds, in perseverance like the mountains, in prostration like water, in lowliness like dirt in the road.

But all these afflictions surround his garden like thorns—within it are roses, the Beloved, and a flowing fountain.

When you pass by the garden's wall and enter into its greenery, you will give thanks and prostrate yourself in gratitude:

"Thanksgiving and praise belong to God! For He has taken away autumn's cruelty. The earth has blossomed, spring has shown its face!

A thousand naked branches have put on robes of flowers! A thousand desert thorns have lost their teeth!"

How should the man of intellect know the sweetness of heartache for the Beloved? He is like a weaver who knows not the arts of war and horsemanship.

The lovers are your brother, mother, and father—for they have all become one, kneaded together by Love.

When a thousand corpses are thrown into the saltmines, they all become salt—no duality remains, no "man from Marv" or "man from Balkh."

Do not pull in the reins of speech because of the thickheadedness of your bored listeners! Behold the thirsty angels in heaven when you pronounce your words! (D 3041)

In God's eyes, whoever has no tint of Love is naught but wood and stone.

Love wrings water from rocks, Love cleans rust from mirrors.

Unbelief has come in war, faith in peace—Love strikes fire to both peace and war.

In the ocean of the heart Love opens its mouth and like a whale swallows down the two worlds.

Love is a lion, without deception and trickery, not a fox one moment and a leopard the next.

When Love provides replenishment upon replenishment, the spirit gains deliverance from this dark and narrow body.

From the beginning Love is all bewilderment—it stuns the intellect and dazzles the spirit.

Oh east wind, my heart is in Tabriz—take my salaams there without delay! (D 1331)

Off with you! Know that the lover's religion is contrary to other ways, for false dealings from the Friend are better than sincerity and kindliness.

What is unthinkable for Him is the actual state, His chastisement the reward, all of His tyranny justice, His slander equity.

His harshness is soft, His synagogue the Kaaba—the thorn driven home by the Heart-ravisher is sweeter than roses and basil.

When He is sour, He is more excellent than a house of sugar; when He comes to you in annoyance, He is all affection and kisses.

When He says to you, "By God, I am sick of you!", that is Khidr's elixir from the Fountain of Life.

When He says "No!" a thousand yea's are hidden within it; in this religion of the selfless, He becomes family and self by remaining a stranger.

His unbelief is faith, His stones all coral, His miserliness generosity, His offenses all forgiveness.

If you taunt me and say, "Your religion is bent out of shape!"—well, I have bought the religion of His bent eyebrow for the price of my spirit.

This bent religion has made me drunk! Enough! I will shut my lips—you continue, oh illuminated heart, and recite the rest silently!

Oh Lord! Oh Shams of God Tabrīzī! What sugar you pour down! You voice a hundred arguments and proofs from my mouth! (D 1869)

## 7. LOVE AND THE INTELLECT

As we have seen, the word "intellect" is ambiguous out of context. It is a reality with many dimensions, the lower of which are intimately connected with the ego, but the higher of which are of the same substance as the angels. Man must strive to overcome his partial intellect, which is dominated by the ego. He must seek the guidance of the Universal Intellect, which is embodied in the prophets and saints. Ultimately he must find the Universal Intellect within himself and come totally under the sway of his own angelic nature.

We have already seen that "the angel and the intellect were one, but they assumed two different forms for God's purposes" (M III 4054). Moreover, there is no doubt that the intellect—whether partial or universal—is created, since "the first thing God created was the Intellect." Hence, when man attains the station of annihilation, the Intellect within him is also annihilated; or rather, he leaves the Intellect behind. In the station of "I am God," only God remains. There cannot be an intellect through which man knows God, since there is not even man, but only Absolute Oneness.

These limitations of the intellect and even the Universal Intellect are expressed symbolically in the accounts of the Prophet's ascent to God's Presence during his *mi'rāj*: Gabriel, who was the Prophet's guide and is the embodiment of the Universal Intellect, was only able to take him as far as the Lote Tree of the Far Boundary on the outermost edge of the seventh sphere. When the two of them reached this point, Gabriel told the Prophet that he could go no farther without burning his wings. So the Prophet ascended the last stages alone.

Since Love brings about man's annihilation and subsistence, it transcends the intellect, which, from this point of view, is looked upon as an obstruction in Love's path. The juxtaposition of Love and intellect plays an important role in much of Sufi literature, and Rūmī's works are no exception. However, the criticisms Rūmī makes of the intellect from the point of view of Love must never be taken out of the context of his whole teachings, within which the intellect plays a major and positive role. For it is no less than the necessary preparation for Love and man's guide to the doorway of God's sanctuary, just as Gabriel was a necessary guide on the Prophet's *mi'rāj*. But as for the last step of the journey, that can only be traveled upon the legs of Love and self-naughting.

God gave you two hands, meaning, "Grasp my skirt!" He gave you an intellect so that you might follow the path to heaven.

For intellect is the same in kind as the angel and runs toward it. You will see it if you hide yourself from the mirror's surface. (D 32545-46)

When the sun goes, what remains? Black night. When the intellect departs from the head, what remains but foolishness?

Oh intellect, everyone's troubles stem from your departure! Then you lay the blame upon the body without an intellect.

Wherever you turn your back are found error and war, wherever you show your face are seen intoxication and passionate love. (D 31643-45)

This is good: an intellect from that side, effective in looking toward the ultimate end, free of cupidity and sensuality, and prepared for Love. (D 25715)

The intellect is that which, constantly, night and day, is agitated and restless from its meditation, effort, and striving to comprehend the Creator—even though He is uncomprehended and incomprehensible. The intellect is like a moth, the Beloved a candle. As much as the moth throws itself upon the candle, it is burned and destroyed. But the



moth is that which, however much it suffers harm, burning and pain, cannot do without the candle. (F 36/47)

Without doubt, only angelic attributes are Love's confidant: You are still caught in the attributes of asses, demons, and beasts. (D 30358)

Where do angels find food? From the beauty of God's Presence—the moon and the planets seek nourishment from the world's sun. (D 21945)

Intellect is good and desirable to the extent it brings you to the King's door. Once you have reached His door, then divorce the intellect! From this time on, the intellect will be to your loss and a brigand. When you reach Him, entrust yourself to Him! You have no business with the how and the wherefore. (F 112/122-123)

Know that the intellect's cleverness all belongs to the vestibule. Even if it possesses the knowledge of Plato, it is still outside the palace. (D 5141)

Intellect is like a magistrate. When the Sultan comes, the miserable intellect slinks off to a corner.

Intellect is a shadow, God the sun: How can a shadow stand up to the sun? (M IV 2110-11)

Before Thee, who is the Universal Intellect? A child just entering school. Compared to Thy perfection, what does the Intellect possess other than a beard and a turban? (D 26889)

At the words of my Heart-ravisher, the intellect flew from my head. The Universal Intellect did not catch a scent of the rest of the story—so what place was there for me? (D 19160)

Even if Thou settest a fire which consumes the Universal Intellect's garden, Thou wilt make thousands of gardens from non-intellect and madness. (D 26573)

When Muḥammad passed the Lote Tree and Gabriel's observation post, station, and limit,

He said to Gabriel, "Come, fly after me!" He replied, "Go! Go! I am not your match!"

Again he said, "Come, oh burner of veils! I have still not reached my zenith."

He replied, "Oh my sweet glory! If I fly beyond this limit, my wings will burn."

This tale of how the elect become senseless before the most elect is bewilderment within bewilderment!

...  
Oh Gabriel! Although you are noble and mighty, you are neither moth nor candle.

When the flaming candle sends its invitation, the moth's spirit does not hold back from being consumed! (M IV 3801-05, 07-08)

In the screaming gale of Love, the intellect is a gnat. How can intellects find space to wander there?

When the journey went beyond the Lote Tree, Gabriel held back from Muḥammad:

"I will burn if I come, for in that place there is only Love and naughting." (D 7600-02)

I am with the King, I am both slave and King—how can Gabriel find room where there are only God and I? (D 34953)

I had wings like Gabriel—six hundred wings were mine. When I arrived at His side, what use were wings? (D 5791)

Without the Burāq of Love and the effort of Gabriel, how will you reach those stations like Muḥammad? (D 30751)

The partial intellect is a vulture, oh destitute man! Its wings are connected to carrion eating.

The intellect of the saints is like Gabriel's wing—it takes you mile by mile to the shade of the Lote Tree. (M VI 4138-39)

The partial intellect is a denier of Love, even if it pretends to know the mysteries.

It is clever and knowledgeable, but not naughted—as long as the angel is not naughted, it is a demon. (M I 1982-83)

If you build yourself a hen house, try not to put a camel inside it—with its long neck.

The hen is the intellect and the house your body; the camel is the beauty of Love, with its stature and upright head. (D 31168-69)

Trying to explain Love, the intellect fell down in the mud like an ass—Love and loverhood can only be explained by Love.

The sun is the sun's proof: If you must have proof, then turn not your face away from it. (M I 115-116)

Like a shark Love has again shown its head, smashing the intellect's rowboat in Love's ocean. (D 13877)

Do not listen to tales of Love's heartache from a rational man, for he has cold lips and chin.

Have you or anyone else ever seen an icebox give a sign of fire? (D 24887-88)

He that is fortunate and a confidant of the mysteries knows that cleverness is from Iblis and love from Adam.

Cleverness is to swim in the sea. But the swimmer can hardly escape—in the end he will drown.

Leave off swimming, abandon pride and spite! This is not the Oxus or some stream, this is the Ocean!

What is more, it is a deep Ocean with no sanctuary—it swallows down the seven seas like a straw.

Love is a ship for the elect: Misfortunes are few, most are saved.

Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment! Cleverness is opinion, bewilderment vision.

Sacrifice your intellect before Muḥammad! Say, God is enough for me (XXXIX 38), for He suffices. . . .

Make yourself a simpleton and follow the saint: You will find salvation only by being a simpleton.

Hence, oh father, that king of men, the Prophet, said, "Most of the people of paradise are simpletons."

Since cleverness is your pride and fills you with wind, become a simpleton so that your heart may remain healthy,

Not a simpleton warped by buffoonery, but one distraught and bewildered in God.

Those women who cut their hands were simpletons—simpletons in relation to their hands, but they gave notice of Joseph's face.

Sacrifice your intellect for the love of the Friend; in any case, all intellects come from His side.

The true possessors of intellects have sent their intellects to that side; the fool has remained on this side, where the Beloved cannot be found.

If your intellect departs from your head in bewilderment, every hair on your head will become a head and an intellect. (M IV 1402-08, 19-26)

In the glory and splendor of Love, you will find many intellectual concepts other than these.

Beside this intellect of yours God has many intellects, governing the intermediate causes of the heavens.

Through this intellect you gain your daily bread, but through that other you will make the spheres your carpet.

When you sacrifice your intellect in love for God, He will give you ten like it, or seven hundred. (M V 3233-36)

If you have a heart, lose it! If you have an intellect, become mad! For the partial intellect is a boil on love's eye. (D 24224)

Though Iblis had knowledge, he had nothing of religion's love, so he saw naught in Adam but an imprint in clay. (M VI 260)

The intellect's splendor is not embraced by the seven heavens—oh Love, why has it gone into thy trap and bag?

Though the intellect is but a single grain from Love's granary, all your feathers and wings are attached to it. (D 22989-90)

He who has not seen Thy Beauty makes the intellect his kiblah—a blind man carries a cane instead of a lamp. (D 11437)

Love has no thoughts, for thought is a cane. The intellect's cane shows it is blind. (D 16734)

Oh intellect! You were copper and then Love made you gold. You are not the elixir, you are the science of the elixir. (D 36313)

Until Thy Love burns my intellect to ashes, I am heedless, not intelligent—Come! Come! Come! Come! (D 1790)

If intellect is a judge, then where is its diploma and license? Seeing the outcome of affairs, patience, dignity, and faithfulness.

If Love is a confidant, then what is the mark of its confidence? All but the Face of the Friend is annihilated in its vision. (D 4901-02)

The intellect's merchandise is evidence, but Love's is to give up the spirit: At the time of contemplation, it scatters the spirit's pearls.

If you fasten together a thousand spirits, hearts, and intellects, they will not take you to His window without Love. (D 9485-86)

Lovers and men of intellect do not mingle, since no one mixes the broken with the unbroken.

In caution, men of intellect pull back from a dead ant; without cares, lovers trample upon dragons. (D 25018-19)

Men of intellect become broken before Him out of necessity, but lovers become broken with a hundredfold free will.

Men of intellect are His slaves in chains, but His lovers are sugar and candy.

Come unwillingly! is the bridle of the men of intellect; Come willingly! (XLI 11) is springtime for those who have lost their hearts. (M III 4470-72)

On guard against drowning, men of intellect flee from it—but lovers have no work and profession except drowning in the Ocean.

Men of intellect gain ease when given ease; lovers consider bondage to ease a disgrace. (D 20656-57)

The intellect says, "The six directions are limits and there is no way out." Love says, "There is a way, and I have traveled it many times."

The intellect saw a bazaar and began to trade; Love saw many bazaars beyond the intellect's bazaar. . . .

The lovers who quaff the wine's dregs have many ecstasies within; the dark-hearted men of intellect are inwardly full of denial.

The intellect says, "Do not go forward, for annihilation contains only thorns." Love says to the intellect, "The thorns are in you."

Enough! Silence! Extract the thorn of existence from the heart's foot! Then you will see many rosegardens within yourself. (D 1522-23, 25-27)

Do not remain a man of intellect among the lovers, especially if you love that sweet-faced Beloved.

May the men of intellect stay far from the lovers, may the smell of dung stay far from the east wind!

If a man of intellect should enter, tell him the way is blocked; but if a lover should come, extend him a hundred welcomes!

By the time intellect has deliberated and reflected, love has flown to the seventh heaven.

By the time intellect has found a camel for the hajj, love has circled the Kaaba.

Love has come and covered my mouth: "Throw away your poetry and come to the stars!" (D 182)

## 8. BEWILDERMENT AND MADNESS

The sign of the man of intellect is sober rationality and cold cognizance of his own situation and that of the world. But the lover is bewildered, distraught, and mad.

Who can describe the work of the Ineffable? I have only spoken like this because I have no choice.

Sometimes He shows Himself in one way, sometimes in the opposite way—the work of religion is naught but bewilderment.

Not a bewilderment that turns you away from Him, but one that drowns you in the Friend and intoxicates you with Him. (M I 311-313)

Love for Thee bewilders, vision of Thee delights—for the Ocean does that and the Pearl does this. (D 7766)

Let me wash my heart of all knowledge, let me make myself heedless of self: One must not go before the auspicious Beloved as a master of all sorts of sciences.

The spirits of madmen know that this spirit is the shell of the spirit: For the sake of this knowledge, you must pass beyond knowledge into madness. (D 19447-48)

Lay the blame upon yourself, not upon the manifest signs of religion! How can a bird of clay fly to religion's celestial sphere?

A bird's loftiest soaring place is the air, for it has grown up from sensuality and self-will.

So be bewildered, saying neither yes nor no! Then Mercy may send you a means.

Since you are too dull to understand these wonders, if you say yes, you will be pretending.

And if you say no, that no will lop off your head—it will make Severity shut your window.

Therefore be bewildered and distraught, nothing less, so that God's help may come to you from before and behind.

Once you have become bewildered, dizzy, and annihilated, then your spiritual state will say, Lead us on the Straight Path! (I 5)

Severity is truly awesome, but once you begin to tremble, that awesomeness becomes soft and smooth;

For the awesome shape is aimed at the denier—once you become helpless, it turns into Gentleness and Kindness. (M IV 3746-54)

Whoever tastes religion's sweetness—how should he enjoy the world's honey?

What do you want with an intellect like yours, turned upside down by a little wine?

Sell your intellect and buy only bewilderment! Such a purchase will bring you gain. (D 10446-48)

Art Thou the sun, or Venus, or the moon? I don't know. What dost Thou want from this bewildered madman? I don't know.

In this court of Ineffability all is Gentleness and Harmony—what plain art Thou, what meadow, what court? I don't know.

In the celestial field crossed by the Milky Way, the stars are gathered about Thee like Turcomans. What tent art Thou? I don't know.

Thy Face has made my spirit roses, violets, narcissus, and lilies; Thy Moon has illuminated my moon. What companion art Thou? I don't know.

What a marvellous ocean within the heart, full of fish and shoreless! I have never seen such an ocean, I do not know such fish.

The kingship of creatures is a tale, as insignificant as a kingcup—no king do I know but that Subsistent King.

Marvellous, infinite Sun—all of Thy dustmotes are speaking! Art Thou the Light of God's Essence? Art Thou God? I don't know.

Thy comeliness is burning the souls of a thousand Jacobs to cinders—oh Joseph of beauties, why art Thou in this well? I don't know.

Be silent! For you are a talebearer, you are drowned in constant change. At one moment you are hū, at another hā, at another ūh—I don't know.

I will be silent, for I am drunk from the spell that has overcome me. I do not know selflessness and intoxication from awareness. (D 1436)

Oh enemy of my intellect! Oh remedy of my ignorance! I am a vat, and Thou art the wine fermenting within.

Thou art the First and the Last, Thou art the Outward and within the head (Koran LVII 3), Thou art sultan and shah, chamberlain and guard.

Thou art sweet natured and ill-natured, heart-burning and heart-soothing, moon-faced Joseph and an obstacle, a veil.

Thou art exceedingly fresh and verdant, very comely and fine—Thou art in my mind like the intellect and upon my ear like a ring.

Thou art far away and self, before and more, ill-thinking friend, venom and elixir.

Oh Ambusher of the selfless, oh Treasurer of the dervishes! Oh Lord, how joyful are the fakirs when Thou art in their embrace!

On the day I am sober, I am full of drunken brawling—but when I am drunk, what patience and silence! (D 2602)

Every day He brings me madness, He presents me with another game—for I am His toy, bewildered at His games. (D 19410)

Although your intellect is flying upward, the bird of your imitative knowledge is feeding upon the ground.

Imitative knowledge is the bane of our spirit: It is a borrowed thing, and we sit complacently saying, "It is ours."

You must become ignorant of this intelligence: You must become mad!

Whatever you see as profitable, flee from it! Drink poison and pour away the water of life!

Curse anyone who praises you! Lend your profit and capital to the indigent!

Abandon security and stay in frightful places! Throw away reputation, become disgraced and shameless!

I have tested the far-seeing intellect—after this I will make myself mad.

One night the king, Sayyed-i Ajall, said to Dalqak, "You ran off hastily and married a harlot.

You should have consulted with me and I would have found a chaste woman for you."

He replied, "I have married nine pious and chaste women, and each one became a harlot, while I wasted away in grief.

I married this harlot without any introduction to see what would happen in the end.

I have tested the intellect many times—from now on, I will seek a seedbed for madness." (M II 2326-37)

In this path, anything other than confusion and madness is distance and alienation from God. (M VI 609)

Behold how the madmen have jumped up and been delivered from the shackles of existence! See how they have set their hearts on losing them, for these hearts are snares of affliction. (D 423)

Just as intellects are bewildered by my madness, I am bewildered by the frozen state of these intellects.

Ice enveloped by shadows will not melt—it cannot see the rays of my shining sun. (D 18256-57)

Intellect ate some opium from Love's hand: Now  
watch out for intellect's madness!

Today both mad Love and rational intellect are  
mad.

The Oxus, which had begun to flow because of  
love for the Sea, has become the Sea—the Oxus has been  
obliterated.

When it reached Love, it saw an ocean of  
blood—intellect sat in the blood's midst.

The waves of blood crashed down upon its head  
and took it away from all six directions toward the  
Directionless,

Until it lost itself completely and became  
nimble and well proportioned in Love.

While lost, it reached a place where the earth  
and the heavens did not exist.

When it wanted to go forward, it had no feet—  
but if it had sat, it would have suffered great loss.

Suddenly it saw from the other side of both  
obliteration and the universe an Ineffable Light,

One banner and a hundred thousand spears. It  
became enthralled by that Gentle Light:

Its feet had been stuck but began to move;  
forward it went in that incredible plain,

Hoping to pass Yonder and be delivered from  
self and everything below.

Two valleys appeared upon its path, one full of  
fire and the other roses.

A call came, "Go into the fire and find yourself  
in the rosegarden of ease!

But if you enter the rosery, you will find  
yourself in fire and furnace.

Either fly to the heavens like Jesus, or fall to  
the depths like Korah!"<sup>11</sup>

Flee and seek the sanctuary of the spirit's king  
so that you may escape every snare,

That Sun of Religion and Pride of Tabriz, who  
is greater than any attribute you give him! (D 1931)

My madness has become the capital of a  
hundred men of intellect, my bitterness has become an ocean  
of sugar eating. (D 27721)

Be mad and distracted like you were! Why have  
you become rational and sober?

Thinking is for the sake of acquisition—but you  
have become bestowal from head to foot! (D 28080-01)

Oh people! Oh people! You will not find human  
nature in me! Even a madman could not conceive of what I  
have conceived in my heart!

The madman's star has been eclipsed, he has  
fled from my commotion—I have mixed with death, I have  
flown into nonexistence. (D 14490—91)

Oh Saki, the intellects entered into the house  
with madness! They poured blood into madness' cup until it  
spilled over!

The thirsty men and women have burned a  
hundred thousand houses of existence, showing their  
manliness in madness. . . .

Do you not see that the moth of madness keeps  
on throwing itself upon the candle because of Love's  
overpowering force?

As soon as the spirit and heart heard the tale of  
madness from the intellect, they stuffed their ears with cotton  
so as not to hear the tale of the two worlds. (D 29743-44,  
46-47)

Oh happy and respectable man! Am I mad, or  
are you? Drink a cup with me, leave aside blame! (D 872)

## C.

## Separation and Union

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God's Love brings the universe into existence, and its reflection within the creatures provides the motive force for every single activity found in the world, from that of the smallest atom to that of the stars and the heavens. It finds its fullest reflection in man, in whom derivative love may once again become true Love.

In the path of Love and spiritual realization, the lover undergoes two fundamental experiences: union (*wiṣāl*) with the Beloved and separation (*firāq*, *hijrān*) from Him. Like all sets of opposites, these two terms are relative. In practice this means that there are an infinite number of degrees of each. One station may be considered "union" in relation to what has come before, but "separation" in relation to a higher station. Moreover, until the traveler reaches the very highest stages of sanctity, the station of union will be temporary, followed by at least a relative separation. The well-known Sufi terms "expansion" (*bast*) and "contraction" (*qabḍ*) refer to the experience of various degrees of relative union and separation. Even the "ups and downs" which all people experience in their everyday lives are dim reflections of these spiritual states.

At the highest stages, "union" is equivalent to "subsistence" in God. Subsistence in turn is the other side of annihilation: Annihilation, or the negation of self, results in subsistence, or the affirmation of Self. Union with God is self-annihilation, so separation from Him is self-existence. As long as man continues to live under the illusion of the real existence of his own ego, his own selfhood, he is far from God. Only through negation of himself can he attain to union with Him.

Since true existence and true life lie in subsistence and union, separation is death. So just as the term "death" may mean the dissolution of the body, or much more commonly, the annihilation of self, so also it may mean what we normally call "life," that is, existence without the Beloved, separation. When Rūmī speaks of having died many times, he may be referring to either of these last two meanings. In any case, his point is the same: During the spiritual journey, man undergoes consecutive experiences of separation and union, or death and life. But each time he dies and is reborn, he moves closer to the ultimate station of subsistence and "I am God."

The lovers die at every moment, for their dying is not of one kind.

The lover has received two hundred spirits from the Spirit of Guidance, and he sacrifices them all at every instant.

For every spirit he receives ten in return—read the Koran: Ten the like of it (VI 161). (M III 3834-36)

My life is union with Thee, my death separation—Thou hast made me unparalleled in both arts. (D 21253)

Union with Him is the Night of Power (Koran XC VII), separation from Him the night of the grave—the night of the grave sees miraculous generosity and replenishment from the Night of His Power. (D 6169)

God's Love, through which the world comes into existence, manifests itself in keeping with the two fundamental categories of Attributes: those of Severity and Gentleness. As we have already seen, the whole universe—all its oppositions, conflicts, and variegations—derives from the harmonious interaction of these two Attributes. For the lover, they manifest themselves as separation and union. Hence, both separation and union are performing the same task: making the Hidden Treasure manifest. Through their interplay man is led ever upward toward the full and complete manifestation of the Attributes which are reflected within himself.

In describing the innumerable spiritual stations and states experienced by the lover, the Sufi poets employ a wide range of images and symbols. Although these are drawn from the world of "forms," they are chosen deliberately for the particular "meanings" they express—meanings which are unveiled for the Sufi in his visions and ecstasies. Many of them take on the character of technical terms in Sufi literature.

Like other Sufi poets, Rūmī employs imagery which possesses a particular technical significance, as I will attempt to illustrate in coming

chapters. Even so, the general sense of his verses is always easy to grasp, once a simple principle is understood: Whatever the lover says concerns his Beloved.

When I start from the beginning, He is my leader; when I seek my heart, He is its ravisher.

When I strive for peace, He intercedes for me; when I go to war, He is my dagger.

When I come to the gathering, He is the wine and the sweetmeats; when I enter the garden, He is the narcissus.

When I go down to the mine, He is the ruby and carnelian; when I dive into the sea, He is the pearl.

When I cross the desert, He is the oasis; when I ascend the spheres, He is the star.

When I show my fortitude, He is my breast, when I burn from heartache, He is the censor.

When I enter battle at the time of war, He keeps the ranks and leads the army.

When I go to a banquet at the time of joy, He is the saki, minstrel, and cup.

When I write letters to my friends, He is paper, pen, and ink-well.

When I awaken, He is my new awareness; when I go to bed, He enters my dreams.

When I seek a rhyme for my poetry, He eases the way for my mind.

He stands above whatever form you can picture, like painter and pen.

No matter how much higher you look, He is still higher than that "higher" of yours.

Go, abandon speaking and books—much better it is to let Him be your book.

Be silent! For all six directions are His Light; and when you pass beyond the directions, He Himself is the Ruler.

I have preferred Thy Pleasure over my own; Thy secret is mine, so I keep it hidden.

Marvellous sun of Tabriz! Like the sun, he is exceedingly worthy of himself. (D 2251)

In the following passage from the *Mathnawī Rūmī* explains in a more didactic manner and within the context of separation and union how the lover is concerned only with his Beloved. The passage also warns of the danger of false Sufis who have stolen the outward form

of Sufi imagery without understanding its meaning and employ Sufi terminology for their own gain. By "Language of the Birds" he means the language spoken only by the bird of the spirit that has flown to the sky of God's Presence.

The vulgar have learned some of the Language of the Birds and claimed for themselves pomp and leadership.

But those words are only the form of the birds' calls: The unripe man is heedless of their spiritual states.

Where is a Solomon who knows the birds' speech? If a demon seizes Solomon's kingdom, he remains an outsider.

The demon stands there in Solomon's likeness. He possesses the science of deception, but not the science of We have been taught the Language of the Birds (XXVII 16).

Understand that you are a bird of this world's air, for you have not seen the birds from His Presence.

Phoenixes dwell on the other side of Mount Qāf—not every imagination can attain that place,

Only the imagination that has contemplated Unification, and then, after direct vision, has undergone separation;

Not a definitive separation, but one for a good purpose, since that station is secure from all separation:

In order to preserve the spiritualized body, the Sun pulls back from the snow for a moment.

For the sake of your own soul, seek well-being from the saints! Beware, do not steal terminology from their speech!

Zulaykhā made everything a name for Joseph, from rue-seed to incense.

She hid his name in those names, but she gave knowledge of the secret to her confidants.

If she said, "The wax has become soft from the fire," she meant, "That friend has become warm with me."

If she said, "The moon has risen, look!" and if she said, "That willow branch has become green,"

And if she said, "The leaves are rustling beautifully," and if she said, "The incense is burning sweetly,"

And if she said, "The rose has told a secret to the nightingale," and if she said, "The king has revealed his love for Shahnāz,"

And if she said, "How auspicious is fortune!" and if she said, "Shake out the bedclothes,"

And if she said, "The watercarrier has brought water," and if she said, "The sun has risen,"

And if she said, "Last night they cooked a potfull," or "The vegetables have been done to perfection,"

And if she said, "The bread has no salt," and if she said, "The heavens are revolving backwards,"

And if she said, "My head has begun to ache," and if she said, "My headache is better"—

If she praised something, she was praising his embrace; and if she blamed something, she was blaming separation from him.

If she piled up a hundred thousand names, her aim and her desire was always Joseph. (M VI 4010-13. 15-33)

These lines are a key to understanding all of Rūmī's imagery: If he praises, he is praising union with the Beloved; and if he blames, he is blaming separation. It is not really necessary for a reader to understand any of Rūmī's technical terms for him to understand the purport of many or most of his verses. However this may be, familiarity with Rūmī's basic imagery can help us understand how closely Rūmī follows Zulaykhā's example.

## 1. SEPARATION AND SUFFERING

The Sufi poets often "blame" the Beloved in terms which make one think that at the least, they are showing discourtesy toward their Creator. For the Beloved can sometimes be cruel, enjoys inflicting suffering on the innocent, and revels in shedding their blood.

Alas! Alas! A faithful person like me desiring a blood-eater like Thee!

Alas! Alas! Thou art a blood-shedding physician at the side of the weeping patient.

These cruelties Thou hast inflicted upon me—no lover inflicts them upon his lover.

I said to Him, "Do you want to shed my blood without any offense or sin on my part?" He said, "Yes,

Love kills none but the innocent: My Love will not kill a sinner.

At every moment I burn down rosegardens. What are you to Me? A thorn.

I have smashed a thousand joy-strumming harps. What are you in My claws? A string.

My army has devastated the cities. Who are you? A broken-down wall." (D 33679-86)

The basic point of such verses is that man in his self-existence cannot see things the way they are. Death to self, which appears outwardly as suffering and torment, is in fact the source of all joy, and the "joys" we normally experience are torments, for they keep us far from God. Since man is attached to himself, he suffers through the afflictions he meets. But these afflictions are all Mercy hidden in the guise of Wrath. God makes him suffer so that he will abandon attachment to himself and strive to attain to Self. Moreover, once the traveler has caught a glimpse of union, his separation is bitter tribulation, far worse than any suffering the world can inflict. The fundamental problem of most men is that they do not realize that every hardship and pain they undergo is only a shadow of their separation from God. Some men dwell in even greater illusion, however, since they do not know that their very existence is nothing but pain and suffering.

For example, someone has been bound fast by four pegs. He imagines that he is happy; he has forgotten the joy of freedom. When delivered from the pegs, he will understand what torment he was going through. In the same way, infants find nurture and ease in a cradle while their hands are bound. If a grown man were bound in a cradle, that would be torment and prison. (F 194/203)

The first step on the road to deliverance is thus to realize that one is constantly suffering pain and torment, that one's spirit is bound fast by the four elements and desires only to escape. As we have already seen, Rūmī considers this awareness of pain (*dard*) as the doorway to the path of Love, and he advises us, "Seek pain! Seek pain, pain, pain!" (M VI 4304) Man cannot truly understand the meaning of pain and "suffering" (*ranj*) until he becomes aware of his state of separation. The more aware he is, the more he suffers.

Whoever is more awake has greater pain, whoever is more aware has a yellower face. (M I 629)

The prophets and saints are the most aware of all creatures. This is why the Prophet said, "Those who suffer the most tribulation are the prophets, then the righteous, then the most excellent after them, and so on."

There is an animal called the porcupine that becomes large and fat if you beat it with a stick.

The more you beat it, the more it thrives, growing fat on the blows of the stick.



The believer's spirit is in truth a porcupine, for the blows of suffering make it large and fat.

That is why the suffering and tribulation inflicted upon the prophets is greater than that inflicted upon all the world's creatures. (M IV 97-100)

Hence man must not flee suffering; he must welcome it in the knowledge that it increases his love for its opposite, the joy and ecstasy of union. The more man suffers, the more he desires to be free of the source of his suffering: his self-existence. Heartache (ghamm) and the cruelty (jafā') inflicted by the Beloved make way for joy (shādī, surūr) and His faithfulness (wafā'). Trials and tribulations are all necessary stages of purification, through which man is delivered from attachment to himself and the world. At the same time, his reaction to suffering shows his worth. If he tries to flee it through various stratagems, he is in fact fleeing God. He must not flee his pain and heartache—which come to him from God—but his own self. The only way to flee from suffering is to seek refuge from one's own ego with God. But having chosen God, man has also chosen to accept with equanimity whatever He wishes to give. Any other course of action shows that he is still attached to self. Finally, Rūmī often points out that a cruelty inflicted by the Beloved is better than the kindness and faithfulness of all the creatures of the world.

In order to pull us up and help us travel,  
messenger after messenger comes from that Source of  
existence:

Every heartache and suffering that enters your  
body and heart pulls you by the ear to the promised  
Abode. (D 35486-87)

He has afflicted you from every direction in  
order to pull you back to the Directionless. (D 3952)

Happy is the spirit awakened from slumber by  
His chastisement! Rejoicing in it, it counts it a blessing. (D  
5995)

Between God and His servant are just two veils;  
all other veils become manifest from these two: health and  
wealth. He who is healthy says, "Where is God? I don't know  
and I don't see." As soon as he begins to suffer, he says, "Oh  
God! Oh God!", and he begins sharing his secrets with Him  
and talking to Him. So you see that health was his veil, and  
God was hidden under his pain. So long as man has riches, he  
gathers together all the means of achieving his desires. Night  
and day he busies himself with them. But as soon as he loses

his wealth, his ego weakens and he turns round about  
God. (F 233/240)

Someone said: I have been negligent. The  
master said: A thought and reproach comes to a person, so he  
says, "What am I doing? Why am I doing it?" This is proof of  
God's love and favor: "Love remains so long as reproach  
remains." For one reproaches friends, not strangers.

Now reproach is of different kinds. When  
someone is reproached and feels pain from it and is made  
aware of it, that is proof that God loves and favors him. But if  
he is reproached and feels no pain, that is no proof of love.  
For example, they beat a carpet with sticks to remove the  
dust. An intelligent man would not call this "reproach." But if  
a man beats his own beloved child, this is called "reproach,"  
and in such cases it is a proof of love. So as long as you see  
pain and regret in yourself, that is proof of God's love and  
favor. (F 23/35)

The Heart-keeper will leave you neither in  
faithfulness nor cruelty, neither in denial nor acknowledgment.

Whenever you turn your heart toward  
something, His Severity will detach you from it—oh heart, fix  
not your heart on any place, do not persist! (D 11949-50)

Oh friend, seek no joy when the Beauty desires  
heartache, for you are prey in a lion's claws.

Should the Heart-ravisher pour mud on your  
head, welcome it in place of Tartarian musk.

Within you hides a dog-natured enemy that can  
be repelled only with cruelty.

When someone beats a rug with a stick, he is  
not beating the rug—his aim is to get rid of the dust.

Your inward is full of dust from the veil of I-  
ness, and that dust will not leave all at once.

With every cruelty and every blow, it departs  
little by little from the heart's face, sometimes in sleep and  
sometimes in wakefulness. (D 12074-79)

The grapes of my body will become wine only  
after the Vintner stomps upon me with His feet.

I surrender my spirit, like grapes, to His  
stomping, so that my inmost consciousness may revel in joy.

Although the grapes keep on weeping blood and  
saying, "I have had enough of this injustice and cruelty,"

The Stomper puts cotton in His ears: "I am not  
pressing out of ignorance.

If you wish to deny, you have an excuse, but I  
am the Master of this work.

When you reach perfection through My efforts and treading, then you will thank Me exceedingly." (D 17584-89)

Should heartache enter your mind and ambush your joy, yet it prepares the way for happiness.

Quickly it sweeps all others out of the house so that joy may come to you from the Source of good.

It shakes the yellow leaves from the branch of the heart, so that fresh leaves may grow continuously.

It pulls up the root of old happiness so that a new ecstasy may stroll in from Yonder.

Heartache pulls up withered and crooked roots so that no root may remain concealed.

Though heartache may extract many things from the heart, in truth it will bring something better in return. (M V 3678-83)

Fire flees from water because water puts it out.

Your senses and thoughts are all fire, but the senses and thoughts of the shaykh are sweet light.

When the water of his light drips upon your fire, it sizzles and jumps up.

As it sizzles and splatters, call it "death" and "pain"—until this hell of your ego becomes cold. (M II 1255-58)

First Thou emptiest the lovers through the anguish of separation, then Thou fillest them with gold to the tops of their heads! (D 29753)

A spiritual fire will come to roast you, but if you jump back like a woman, you are an unripe cuckold.

If you flee not from the fire, you will become completely cooked—like fresh baked bread, you will be the chief and the dear one at table. (D 32967-68)

You are the shame of all men if He should draw a sword in cruelty, and instead of going forward you hunt for a shield. (D 30536)

If you want to attain the spirit and achieve laughing good fortune, then laugh like a rose whether you see gentleness or cruelty. (D 35587)

Pain is man's guide in every work. Unless he senses a pain for that work, until desire and love for that work appear within him, he will not set out to perform it. Without pain, he will not be able to accomplish it, whether it be success in this world or in the next, trade or kingship, the religious sciences or astronomy, or whatever it may be.

As long as Mary did not feel the pain of childbirth, she did not go toward the tree of good fortune. And the pangs of childbirth drove her to the trunk of the palm tree (XIX 23). That pain took her to the tree, and the barren tree bore fruit. The body is like Mary, and each of us has a Jesus within him. If the pain appears, our Jesus will be born. But if no pain comes, Jesus will return to his Origin on that same hidden road by which he came. We will be deprived of him and reap no benefit.

Your inward spirit is poor, but your outward animal nature is rich—the devil has indigestion, but Jamshīd is starving.<sup>12</sup>

Remedy the situation now while your Jesus is here on earth! When he goes to heaven, the cure will be lost. (F 20-21/33)

If man should see himself at all, if he should see that his wound is deadly and gangrenous,

Then from such looking within, pain would arise, and pain would bring him out from behind the veil.

Until mothers feel the pain of childbirth, the child finds no way to be born.

The Trust is within the heart and the heart is pregnant; all the exhortations of the saints act as a midwife.

The midwife says, "The woman has no pain. Pain is necessary, for it will open a way for the child."

He that is without pain is a brigand, for to be without pain is to say "I am God."

To say "I" at the wrong time is a curse, but to say it at the right time is a mercy. (M II 2516-22)

The body is pregnant with the spirit, the body's suffering is the pain of childbirth—the coming of the embryo brings pain and torment for the woman.

Look not at the wine's bitterness, look at the joy of the drunkards! Look not at the woman's affliction, look at the hope of the midwife! (D 24291-92)

Sorrow for His sake is a treasure in my heart. My heart is Light upon light (XXIV 35), a beautiful Mary with Jesus in the womb. (D 5990)

How much the Beloved made me suffer before this work settled into the eye's water and the liver's blood!

A thousand fires and smokes and heartaches—and its name is Love! A thousand pains and regrets and afflictions—and its name is Beloved!

Let every enemy of his own spirit set to work! Welcome to the spirit's sacrifice and a pitiful death!

Look at me, for I see Him worth a hundred deaths like this—I do not fear or flee the Heart-keeper's slaying!

Like the Nile's water, Love's torture has two faces: water to its own people, blood to others.

If incense and candles did not burn, what worth would they have? Incense would be the same as a branch of thorns.

Had war no blows of the sword and spears and arrows, Rustam would be no different from a catamite.

Rustam sees that sword sweeter than sugar, the arrows raining down better than gold coins. (D 12063-69)

Oh friend, Love must have a little pain! The heart must have pain and the cheeks must be a little yellow.

Without pain in the heart and fire in the breast, your claim of fervent devotion is a bit insipid. (D 13970-71)

Oh Love, everyone gives thee names and titles—last night I named thee once more: "Pain without remedy." (D 65)

I wonder at that seeker of purity who flees cruelty at the time of polishing.

Love is like a lawsuit, and to suffer cruelty is the witness: If you have no witness, your lawsuit is lost.

Be not grieved when this Judge asks for your witness: Kiss the serpent and find the treasure! (M III 4008-10)

Hey! Tell us in our language! Speak not in symbols, speak openly! How long will You drink blood in cruelty? Oh, all Your traits are bloody!

How long will You bite his liver? How long will you make attempts at his life? How long will You give him bad news: "Things are like this and like that."

How long will You make his lips bitter? How long will You make his nights dismal? Oh You whose lips are like sugar! Oh You whose night is the Celestial Paradise!

Does honey ever yield poison? Does vinegar rise up out of sugar? How long will You mislead, oh Greatest Misleader!

Whatever You do, Your lips tell tales of sugar! Whatever movement You make, Gentleness is buried within!

How should a cypress resemble a straw? How should gold resemble copper? How should You resemble anyone? Oh King of the Day of Judgment! (D 19103-08)

Be cruel! Thy cruelty is all Gentleness. Do wrong! Thy wrongdoing is all right-action. (D 3650)

The stone thrown by Thee is a pearl, Thy injustice better than a hundred faithfulnesses! (D 5340)

There is an infinite joy whose name is Love: The rule is to complain—otherwise, why should there be any cruelty? (D 5941)

God said, "It is not because he is despicable that I delay My gift to him: That very delay is an aid.

His need brought him from heedlessness to Me, pulling him by the hair to My lane.

Were I to satisfy his need, he would go back and immerse himself in that game.

Although he laments to the bottom of his soul: 'Oh Thou whose protection is sought!'—let him weep with broken heart and wounded breast.

For I am pleased by his voice, his saying, 'Oh God!' and his secret prayers. . . ."

People cage parrots and nightingales to hear the sound of their sweet songs.

But how should they put crows and owls into cages? Who indeed has heard tale of that? . . .

Know for certain that this is the reason the believers suffer disappointment in good and evil. (M VI 4222-26, 28-29, 37)

Let me leave aside the subject and begin to complain of that ten-hearted Beauty's cruelty.

I lament because lamentation pleases Him—the two worlds must lament and grieve for Him.

Why should I not complain bitterly of His deceptions? For I am not within the circle of those intoxicated with Him.

Why should I not lament like night without His day? For I am not in union with His Face that illumines the day.

His unsweetness is sweet in my soul—may my life be sacrificed to the Friend who gives my soul suffering!

To please my unique King I love my own suffering and pain.

I make a collyrium for my eyes from the dust of heartache, so that these two seas may be filled with pearls!

The tears people shed for His sake are pearls, though they think they are tears.

I complain of the Spirit of the spirit, but I am not a complainer, I am only relating.

My heart keeps saying, "I suffer because of Him," and I keep laughing at its weak hypocrisy. (M I 1773-82)

Oh Thou whose Face is like a rose and whose tresses are sweet marjoram! My spirit is joyful when I am in heartache over Thee! (D 4438)

Oh, my spirit is joyful over Thee—may my spirit never be without Thee! My spirit gave its heart to Thee and sits together with Thy heartache.

Heartache for a person's sake is bitter, but this heartache of Love is like sugar. Look no more at this heartache of Love as if it were heartache!

When Love's heartache leaves the breast for an instant, the house becomes a tomb and all its inhabitants grieve. (D 19365-67)

Heartache does not dare come near him who is in heartache for Thee. And if it should come, he must lop off its head. (D 21255)

The remedy for the pain in my heart is pain for Him. Why should I not entrust my heart to His pain? (D 17582)

When Thou sendest less heartache to me, I grieve and my heart constricts. But when Thou pourest down heartache upon me, I am put to shame by its gentleness.

Thy heartache has not allowed me an instant's heartache—desire for Thee has not allowed me to be water and clay. . . .

Marvellous pain Thou inflictest that becomes the cure of my pains! Marvellous dust Thou stirrest up that anoints my eyes with collyrium! . . .

Suffering for Thee allows no suffering to come to me—Thy treasure does not let me be a poor and indigent dervish. (D 15133-34, 36, 38)

So drunk am I with His injustice that I cannot discern it from justice—ask me not about His justice, gentleness, and bestowal! (D 13596)

Thy bitter cruelty makes me into a pearl, oh Spirit—for pearls and coral dwell in the sea's bitterness.

Thy faithfulness is another ocean, so sweet to drink—from it bubble up the four streams of paradise. (D 21869-70)

At the time of union, only God knows what that Moon is! For even during separation, what incredible joy and expansion of spirit! (D 30321)

The scroll of my heart extends to Eternity—without-end, inscribed from first to last, "Do not leave me!" (D 23493)

Separation and parting from Thee is difficult, oh Beloved, especially after Thy embrace! (D 13901)

People avoid death, but dying before Him is like sugar for me—life without Him is my death, glory without Him my shame! (D 18797)

To die in hope of union with Thee is sweet, but the bitterness of separation from Thee is worse than fire. (M V 4117)

Oh Thou who art our Benefactor, make firm our feet! (II 250)—without Thee ease is tribulation and health is sickness! (D 14698)

Thou speakest of separation and parting. Do whatever Thou wilt, but not that!

A hundred thousand bitter sixty-fold deaths are not like separation from Thy Face! (M V 4114-15)

Union with this world is separation from that world. The health of this body is the sickness of the spirit.

It is hard to be separated from this caravanserai—so know that separation from that permanent abode is harder!

Since it is hard for you to be separated from the painting, think what it will be to parted from the Painter!

Oh you who cannot bear to be without this despicable world! How can you bear to be without God, oh friend, how?

Since you cannot bear to be without this black water, how can you bear to be without God's fountain? . . .

If you should see the Beauty of the Loving God for one instant and throw your soul and existence into the fire,

Then, having seen the glory and splendor of His proximity, you would see these sweet beverages as carrion

....

Strive quickly to find Self in selflessness—and God knows best the right course. (M IV 3209-13, 15-16, 18)

Farness from Thee is a death full of pain and torment, especially the farness that comes after union! (M VI 2894)

## 2. UNION AND JOY

Oh, union with Thee is the root of all joys! For these are all forms, but that is meaning. (D 29290)

Just as no pain and suffering can even remotely compare to separation from God, no joy or ecstasy is comparable to union with Him. Again, however, we must keep in mind that there are many stages of union, some temporary and some permanent. The spiritual experiences undergone by the travelers are infinitely varied and ranked in innumerable degrees. These degrees are closely connected to the hierarchy of the saints and prophets, so that what is union for one person may be separation for another.

That which is the essence of Gentleness for the vulgar is Severity for the noble favorites. (M IV 2982)

Rūmī describes the joys of spiritual union in a great variety of images, most of them connected with love and wine. Before we review and discuss them, it may be useful to quote the following passage, which presents a relatively didactic and non-imaginal explanation of the type of experience the saints undergo. Note that Rūmī is discussing the two broad categories of saints: the "travelers" (*sālikān*), or those who have not yet reached a permanent station of subsistence; and "those who are in union" (*wāṣilān*), or those saints who have been so utterly transformed by a station of God-consciousness that they may truly say "I am God."

The "litanies" of the seekers and the travelers are that they busy themselves with spiritual warfare and servanthood. They have apportioned their time so that each moment has its particular task and, like an overseer, habitually pulls them to that task. For example, when a man arises in the morning, that time is most appropriate for worship. . . . There are a hundred thousand ranks. The more a person becomes purified, the higher he is taken. . . .

As for the litanies of those who have attained union, I will tell of them as much as can be understood: In the morning, holy spirits, pure angels, and those creatures whom none knows but God (XIV 9)—whose names He has kept secret from men out of extreme jealousy—come to visit them. . . . You are seated beside them but do not see. You do not hear any of those words and greetings and laughter. . . .

This is a tremendously high station. It is a waste of time even to speak about it, for its tremendousness cannot

be spelled out. If only a small portion of it could be understood, no descriptions, no hands, no aspirations would remain. The armies of Lights would destroy the city of existence: Kings, when they enter a city, ruin it (XXVII 34).

What can I say about the stations of those who have attained union except that they are infinite, while the stations of the travelers have a limit? The limit of the travelers is union. But what could be the limit of those in union?—that is, that union which cannot be marred by separation. No ripe grape ever again becomes green, and no mature fruit ever again becomes raw. (F 122-123/132-134)